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DECAPOLIS:

OR

THE INDIVIDUAL OBLIGATION OF CHRISTIANS TO SAVE SOULS FROM DEATH.

AN ESSAY,

BY

REV. DAVID EVERARD FORD.

"*Jesus saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. And he departed, and began to publish in* Decapolis, *how great things Jesus had done for him; and all men did marvel.*" Mark v. 19, 20.

1872

From the last London Edition.

BOSTON:
TAPPAN & DENNET,
114 Washington Street.

1841.

BV3790
.F6

S N. DICKINSON, Printer,
52 Washington St. Boston.

PREFACE

TO THE FIRST EDITION.

WHATEVER reception may await this book at the hands of the religious public, it is my consolation to know that the views which it advocates have been owned of God to the salvation of many souls.

This is my only apology for a style which may seem in some instances to savour of dogmatism. I have no wish to cast one unkind reflection on brethren who differ from me; to our Master we stand or fall: but I must express myself strongly, for I speak that which I know, and testify that which I have seen.

I have written for Christians. Should my remarks awaken attention, they will fall into the hands of many who have no right to that holy name. A previous question demands their notice, a question to which every other ought to be postponed, and from which I would be among the last to divert them for one moment

— the question of the Philippian gaoler to Paul and Silas, — "What must I do to be saved?"

And who are Christians? The disciples of Christ; men who have given their hearts to God, and, on the ground of the great sacrifice for sin, have consecrated their bodies, souls, and spirits to the service and glory of their Creator and Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.

To such, the following observations are addressed. Brethren! suffer the word of exhortation. Soon we must give an account of our stewardship, and, in the presence of Him who redeemed us unto God by his blood, narrate the efforts we have made to secure and extend the blessings of that atonement in the world where he labored, and for which he died. The Lord grant that we may find mercy of the Lord in that day!

D. E. F.

Lymington, May 29, 1840.

PREFACE

TO THE SECOND EDITION.

Among the happiest recollections of my life, I shall henceforth regard the authorship of the following Essay. I am free to acknowledge that when I first committed it to the press, it was with fear and trembling. My misgivings arose not from any doubt as to the correctness and scriptural sanction of the views which I attempted to advocate; but from apprehensions as to the unpreparedness of the faithful themselves to admit representations of personal responsibility, so repugnant to the comfortable notions and sacred prejudices of men, whose highest wish is to be "at ease in Zion."

I then expected censure, and was prepared to meet it; but now I gratefully record the disappointment of my fears. From all quarters, I have received the most cheering assurances that the blessing of Heaven has already attended this feeble endeavour to awaken the energies of

the Christian world. Of this fact, almost every post brings me some pleasing intelligence; and among my correspondents on that subject, I can reckon some of the most distinguished servants of God, at present found in this earthly region of his universal church.

To the editors of the various religious periodicals which have noticed "Decapolis;" and not less to the numerous friends, known and unknown, who have publicly recommended it from the pulpit or the platform, I present my cordial thanks. But above all, to Him "whom I serve with my spirit in the Gospel of his Son," my grateful acknowledgments are due, that he should have rendered my little book in any degree subservient to the promotion of His glory. To His gracious benediction I now commend this new and enlarged edition, with fervent prayer that every copy may awaken some disciple of Christ to renewed and successful exertion for the salvation of souls.

D. E. F.

Lymington, October 19, 1840.

DECAPOLIS.

CHAPTER I.

The Apostles have now rested from their labours nearly eighteen centuries. Were they to return to earth again, would they find the world, would they find even the church, in that condition in which they expected it to be eighteen hundred years after their decease?

We have no right to evade this question, or to answer it in the affirmative, on the ground of their inspiration: First, because we are not quite sure that it was given them "to know the times" or "the seasons," Acts i. 7; and next, because knowledge derived from such a source, having no connection whatever with human calculation and forethought, would not bear on the present inquiry. The question before us can only be entertained while we speak after the manner of men, and regard the apostles, in

the absence of direct information from Heaven, as forming their opinions of the future, as we are accustomed to form them, according to ap pearances and probabilities. Make then every reasonable allowance for the discouraging matters with which they were undoubtedly acquainted; give all possible weight to the prediction of "a falling away first," and the revelation of the man of sin, 2 Thess. ii. 3; bear in mind that they testified by the Spirit that in the last days perilous times should come, 2 Tim. iii. 1, and that scoffers should walk after their own lusts, saying, "Where is the promise of his coming?" 2 Pet. iii. 4; yet can we imagine that the church of the nineteenth century would be found to answer the expectations which, with all these deductions, they would indulge, and which the successes of their own short and brilliant career abundantly justified?

But apart from all conjecture as to their expectations, does the present state of religion answer our own? Our notion of excellence is probably too defective, and our conception of eminent piety too low, to enable us readily to detect and expose all the evils over which an apostle would mourn; still we may discern

enough to excite our bitter lamentation. The man who can read the New Testament, and maintain that the religion which it teaches is now in the position in which it ought to be, or in the position in which ere now it would have been if the servants of Christ in former ages had been faithful to his claims, has little information, or less piety, and is probably one of the innumerable victims now on their way to perdition, or already there, who may charge the loss of their souls to the apathy of the church, and whose blood will be required at the watchman's hand, Ezek. xxxiii. 6.

To evade the fearful responsibility which such a statement involves, some have gravely questioned whether salvation by Christ was ever intended to be good tidings of great joy "to all people," while others have referred the whole matter to the sovereignty of God, and have assigned as a sufficient reason for the past and present state of things among us, that the time to favour Zion is not yet come. How far these opinions are tenable, it is the design of some of the following pages to inquire. My own conviction is, that they savour less of piety than of indolence, and that they find no sanction

in Divine revelation. "Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built. Is it time, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house of mine to lie waste?" Haggai, i. 2, 4.

Admitting that the expectations of the primitive Christians have failed, it behooves us to account for the failure. Has the Gospel proved itself unequal to the task of overcoming the prejudices and renewing the hearts of men? Or has the Holy Spirit, grieved and disgusted with human depravity, taken his flight to heaven, leaving the church to flounder on amidst its difficulties as best it may?

Happily, these are questions which we are enabled to meet with a decided negative. God has not forsaken his church. The Gospel is still his mighty power unto salvation. Christianity shows no indications of decrepitude or decay. The times have not outgrown it, and we are sure that they never will. The discoveries of science have neither shaken its evidences nor superseded its information, and we are sure that they never will. While human misery remains, here is its balm. While piety

finds an asylum upon earth, here is its temple. While man remains a transgressor, and is desirous of pardon, here is the sacrifice "which taketh away the sin of the world," John i. 29.

We may call a thousand witnesses, men of sound judgment and unquestionable veracity, whose united testimony will prove the truth of these assertions. They will furnish the best possible evidence of the facts, for of those facts they themselves are a part. They know the power of the Gospel, for it has renewed their hearts; they can attest the gracious energy of the Holy Spirit, for he has sanctified their souls; and amidst all the remaining imperfections, of which they are deeply conscious, and from which they daily seek deliverance, each can say, "By the grace of God, I am what I am," 1 Cor. xv. 10.

But though the Gospel proves itself "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth," Rom. i. 16, — the millions do not believe; and, with relation to the greater part, the appalling question still retains its force — "How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how

shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?" Rom. x. 14, 15. And to make the matter incomparably worse, the increase of population and the triumphs of discovery have so far outrun the efforts of the church to spread the Gospel, that we can no longer follow the apostle in the challenge with which he concludes his appeal — "I say, have they not heard? Yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." Verse 18.

The Captain of our salvation, when he ascended on high, commissioned the armies of the faithful to subdue all nations to his dominion. For a season they attended to his orders: the weapons of their warfare were mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strongholds. Nothing could resist them: the fastnesses of ignorance and the ramparts of superstition shared the fate of the walls of Jericho; they fell at the blast of the trumpet, and the hosts of God had only to march onward and take possession. The fear of them fell upon all nations; their enemies submitted by thousands, almost without a struggle, and went over to join their ranks and share their tri-

umphs. Hell looked on with amazement, and the god of this world trembled for his sceptre. Had they thus gone on from conquering to conquer, captivity had now been captive, the whole earth had submitted to the King of Zion, and centuries of peace and righteousness had marked the history of all nations. But they became contented with their conquests; they thought they had done enough, and that the time was come to divide the spoils. Among those spoils was found many a wedge of gold, many a goodly Babylonish garment; and there was no Joshua there to demand that Achan's sin should rest on his own head, and so the anger of the Lord be turned away from the camp of Israel. And what is their position now? Many of their early posts have been abandoned; some of their most valuable possessions have fallen again into the hands of the foe; and throughout the remainder of the conquered territory they have built themselves garrisons and citadels, where they may dwell at ease and sing, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!"—They have boasted, and not without reason, that they have for their defence the munition of

rocks, and that beneath are everlasting arms. They glory in the thought that their bulwarks are impregnable, and that the gates of hell have assaulted them in vain. But these walls of strength they have made their prison; they have dwelt in their garrisons, and have contented themselves with garrison duty: constant on parade, they have had their reviews and their field-days; and the world, the world in rebellion against God, — the world which they were commanded to subdue to the sceptre of Christ, — that world has stood by, admiring the correctness of their movements, the splendour of their uniforms, and the polish of their arms.

Enough of figures; we come to facts. Is it not a fact, that Christians are dwelling at ease, while myriads around them are perishing in ignorance and sin? Is it not a fact, that no aggressive movement, worthy of the cause of God, has been made for ages? Is it not a fact, that though the church has long been praying for the conversion of the world, it has never yet put forth an effort of which it could entertain a hope that God would prosper it to that end?

I make these statements with no view to depreciate the amount of good which has really

been accomplished. In the success which has recently attended the preaching of the Gospel both at home and abroad, most heartily do I rejoice. I am even prepared to admit, that at no former period, since the days of the apostles, have equal exertions been made to spread the knowledge of salvation, and that, in proportion to their extent, they have been crowned with a large measure of success. Still, some melancholy facts not only mark the history of the past, but throw their dark shadows over the future. The church has slumbered for ages, and is now only half awake. "Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?" is an inquiry which betokens incipient consciousness; but the answer falls unheeded, or surely the church would never sleep again: — "The morning cometh, and also the night," Isa. xxi. 12.

"The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty," and it is impossible for the most enlightened mind to entertain any thing like a correct apprehension of the ignorance, and crime, and misery, with which the world abounds. Many hundred millions of human beings, indeed, by far the greater portion

of the entire race, are enduring all the evils which sin has entailed on mankind, without the slightest conception that God has turned the curse into a blessing, is waiting to be gracious, and has so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. The message of heavenly mercy has been in the hands of the church eighteen hundred years, and three fourths of the human race are still unconscious that such a message has been sent.

Well may we say, as David did when Saul and Jonathan were slain, "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph!" But our silence comes too late, and will avail us nothing: it will not even conceal our disgrace; the secret has transpired; hell knows it, and has blazoned it abroad, to persuade mankind that Christians do not believe the religion which they profess.

We leave the heathen world, and turn to Christendom, (a name, by the way, which no country under heaven yet deserves,) and here the view is sufficiently appalling. There is

probably not to be found a single populous district, where Christians bear to the inhabitants a greater proportion than one tenth; and although a large deduction may be made for those who, in our estimation, have not attained the age of personal accountableness, the result is frightful. Christ has the few, Satan the many. Crowds are sinking into perdition from the midst of our most Christianized localities, and their dying groans are saying, "No man careth for our souls."

It is to be questioned whether in England, even in those districts where there is the largest proportion of true godliness, conversion gains upon population. Let any one, acquainted with the facts of our religious history, and competent to form an opinion, compare one census with another, and say whether the total amount of conversions, among all denominations, during the ten intervening years, equals the augmented number of souls within that district; to say nothing of those, (not much less than one third of the whole surviving population,) who during the interval have passed into eternity.

On the reader who questions the correctness of this statement, I would with much affection

and tenderness press the inquiry, Is he a competent judge? "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," John iii. 3. Facts, which will deeply afflict a pious mind, will be regarded with indifference or incredulity by "the natural man," who receives not the things of the Spirit of God, and to whom they are foolishness, 1 Cor. ii. 14. He heeds not the melancholy procession which throngs the road to death, and the reason is, that he is journeying in the same direction.

But are proofs demanded? We have them in abundance. It is a notorious fact, that thousands among us are living in open profligacy, and that thousands more altogether neglect even the forms of godliness: they belong to no religious community, and they seek none. Of those who attend public worship, a large proportion frequent ministrations which have never converted one soul, and never will. And of those who habitually listen to a faithful and apostolic ministry, vast numbers have only a name to live, and are dead, Rev. iii. 1. In all our sanctuaries there are some, in most there are many, of whom no enlightened Christian can entertain a hope; and the only difference between them

and others who are more openly walking in the way of sinners is, that they have found a by-path to hell by the side of Calvary.

It is readily admitted that these appalling facts are disbelieved by some, and overlooked by others, and that on few or none do they produce so deep an impression as their fearfulness demands. But never, until they are rightly regarded, will there be a thorough revival in the church, or a general awakening in the world. In the absence of powerful apprehensions of the guilt and danger of all the unconverted and of the absolute certainty of everlasting death, sinners will give themselves little trouble about salvation, and Christians will never awake to their awful responsibility.

We may set it down as an ascertained fact, that until the terrors of hell are poured forth on the consciences of men, there will never be a general reception of the Gospel, or even a strenuous effort for its propagation. To welcome escape, we must first be aware of our danger. To attempt the relief of suffering, we must first be assured of its existence. And, in either case, our efforts will be proportionate to our convictions.

This accounts for the terrific character of the personal ministry of our Lord. In his discourses, "the worm that dieth not," Mark ix. 44, "the damnation of hell," Matt. xxiii. 33, and "everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," chap. xxv. 41, are subjects of more frequent recurrence than in any of the writings or discourses of the prophets or apostles. From this circumstance we may learn, that real compassion for souls will induce us to call awful things by awful names, that "knowing the terror of the Lord," we may "persuade men," 2 Cor. v. 11, and save them "with fear, pulling them out of the fire," Jude 23. That is indeed mistaken tenderness which soothes, as it nurses for the flames, the victims of the second death. How vain the task to hoard with care, and deck with gold, the vessel of wrath, fitted for destruction, and soon to be dashed in pieces!

And in order to extensive usefulness, there must not only be an apprehension that souls are perishing, but a deep and settled conviction that they deserve to perish. Our views of sin, taken not from the opinions of men, but from the oracles of truth, must give a decided negative to the question, "Is God unrighteous who taketh

vengeance?" Rom. iii. 5. While we harbour the slightest notion that eternal death is too severe a penalty for human guilt, we are less the disciples of Christ than of Satan. "Ye shall not surely die," Gen. iii. 4, was the insinuation of the tempter to Eve, and its effect was fatal. Its ruinous success in that instance, has occasioned its constant repetition ever since; and of all the doctrines of devils, current among mankind, this is undoubtedly the most popular. But fondly as this sentiment is cherished in the heart, it is doomed to fall before the truth. And fall it must, as Dagon fell before the ark of the covenant, ere God will enter in and dwell there.

Hence, the first object of the Holy Spirit is to "reprove the world of sin," John xvi. 8. Whatever the awakened sinner may think of others, he entertains no doubt that he himself deserves eternal death. And so deeply is this conviction wrought upon his mind, that it is often very difficult to persuade him of the possibility of his salvation. And it is only as he apprehends the grand design of the Gospel, that God "might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus," Rom. iii. 26, that he dares to cherish a hope of pardon. But the awakened sinner is

not more righteously or more certainly exposed to everlasting death than his unawakened neighbour, or than the whole unconverted world. The facts are the same. The only difference is, that by him they are perceived, while by others they are disregarded. That which he has discovered by the light of truth, the light of eternity will reveal to all.

To anticipate that fearful disclosure, to warn the sinner of the doom which awaits him, and to warn him now, while yet there remains a way of escape, is the sacred obligation of all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. But it is only in proportion as they themselves believe with the heart all the facts of the case, that they will be prepared thus to serve their generation according to the will of God. Indistinct or doubtful apprehensions of the truth, will utterly disqualify us to become instructers of others. "If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" 1 Cor. xiv. 8.

Christians often allow natural affection to neutralize their religious convictions. They admit that the wrath of God abides on the unbeliever, provided always, however, that the unbeliever on whom that wrath shall abide is

not one of their kindred. They can think of the world at a distance as going down to the chambers of death, and lying there "in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day," Jude 6; but they shrink from the thought when it comes more closely home. It is an awful but indisputable fact, that the most devoted Christians rarely admit that their near relatives are gone to hell. Hence their sincerity is suspected, and their warnings are despised. To show the correctness of this startling assertion, take the following case:

A good man has a profligate son who is cut off in the midst of his sins. The last act of his life was an act of impiety, and the circumstances of his death were such as Solomon predicted: "He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." Prov. xxix. 1. The body is brought home to his father's house, and is there made ready for the grave. That father has other children, for whom he has often trembled, lest the contagion of their brother's example should prove their destruction. Now is the time to make an impression on their hearts, and to turn even the ruin of their brother to a good

account. Imagine then the agonized father, taking each child in succession to view the corpse, and saying, "There lies the body of your wicked brother. His soul is in hell. Take warning, or you will follow him. Flee to Christ at once, or I shall one day despair of your salvation, as I now do of his. The only consolation I have concerning him is, that he has not been able to charge the ruin of his soul to me. I am guiltless of that young man's blood. You know, and God knows, that I warned him day and night with many tears. I prayed for him, I prayed with him, I prayed with him alone, and I besought him by the tender mercies of God, to turn from his wickedness and live, but he would not hearken. And now, I own him for my son no more. Our separation is final and eternal. But, my dear child, 'of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you,' Gal. iv. 19, must I also part with you? Shall all my hopes, and prayers, and aims be lost? Shall it never be mine to say before the throne, 'Here am I, and the children which God has given me?' Your brother has perished in his sins. Will you perish too? Is the Redeemer of the world unworthy of your love? He died for your sal-

vation. Will you refuse to obey him? He is waiting to pardon your sins. Will you have redemption through his blood? He is waiting to receive your soul. Will you devote it to his praise? Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. Hear his voice. Harden not your heart. Flee for refuge, to lay hold of the hope set before you. And then I shall rejoice amidst my sorrows, and say, at least of you, 'This my son was dead, and is alive again, he was lost, and is found.'" Let such an address be immediately followed by prayer suited to the awful occasion, and where is the child that would ever forget it, or afterwards think his father's religion a lie?

Do any ask, What father could do it? I answer, the man who believes his Bible, and thinks it bad enough to have *one* child in hell. But suppose, that instead of taking such a course, he spares his feelings. He cannot bear to think that his child is lost. He breathes the whisper of hope where facts warrant nothing but despair. And what is the result? One son says to himself, "Well, I am sure that my poor brother was a great deal worse than I have ever been. He died as he lived, and if he is gone to heaven, I

need not be afraid of going to hell." That young man takes courage in his sins, and from that day becomes a profligate. Another comes to the conclusion, that with all his pretence to piety, his father does not believe the religion which he professes; that the wrath of God, and the loss of the soul, are phrases which have a place in his creed, but to which there is nothing correspondent in the true sentiments of his heart. He leaps to the conclusion, that if his father is a hypocrite, religious men in general are no better; and thus the circumstance which, if rightly improved, might have been God's message of mercy to the salvation of his soul, seals his ruin. He becomes an infidel.

It may perhaps be objected that this case is an extreme and improbable one, and that no real Christian would entertain hope of a child who had died under such circumstances. Perhaps not. But many who pass for Christians would, and few would censure them. Had they been in the place of David when Absalom was slain, instead of regarding his soul as lost, as he evidently did, they would have cherished the hope that the interval, "while he was yet in the midst of the oak," was so employed, that the

darts of Joab, when they were thrust through his heart, inflicted the last pang he would ever suffer.

Conversion in the last extremity of life, is the only hope of the multitude. It is the last resort of the impenitent, and Christians have sanctioned the delusion. Even their anxiety to visit the sick has been wrongly interpreted by the world, and taken to indicate views of religion, from which an enlightened mind would shrink with horror. Thousands are of opinion, that all that needs to be done to set them right for heaven, is to have some spiritual adviser to attend their last hours. "This their way is their folly, yet their posterity approve their sayings." Warm-hearted, but injudicious Christians, have given it their sanction, by laying great stress on circumstances which at best would only warrant a trembling hope. Sorrow for sin, and alarm of conscience, prompted only by the near approach of eternity, have been mistaken for conviction and repentance of "a godly sort," 2 Cor. vii. 9—11, and the promises of the Gospel, and the consolations of Christ, have been addressed to persons, to whom the extent and spirituality of the claims

of God, and the terrors of his righteous law, would have been subjects far more seasonable.

The common result of such treatment is, that all anxiety is hushed, and a calm ensues which not a breath disturbs. The man has mistaken remorse for penitence, and vows of a new life for evidence that he is a new creature. All misgivings, doubts, and fears, are thenceforth regarded as intrusive, and are instantly put away. "A deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" Isa. xliv. 20. And thus he leaves the world. His supposed conversion and happy death supply the subject of a funeral sermon. Large numbers attend, for the occasion is an attractive one. They wish to learn how men may neglect the claims of God in health and strength, and yet find peace and joy on the arrival of sickness and death. It is the very thing which they most of all desire. If they may but neglect religion all their lives, they have no objection whatever to pay it their dying regards. They listen with approving attention, and take courage to trifle a little longer. Oh, what a sermon would they have

if the lost soul could occupy that pulpit, and tell them that the peace which comes not by the blood of the cross is a delusion, Col. i. 20, and that the hope of the hypocrite shall perish! Job xxvii. 8.

I am aware that such statements as these are thought very uncharitable. Be it so! Charity to the dead is often destruction to the living; and it is with the latter exclusively that we have to do. The departed cannot be injured, or even annoyed, by any judgment of ours, however uncharitable; whereas our favorable opinion concerning them may induce others to go and do likewise — to trifle with Christ and eternity till health and life are almost gone, and then, when the world can charm no longer, to compromise matters with their Creator as best they may. Thus, while on the one hand the indulgence of groundless hope can render no service to the objects of our compassion, (now, alas! too late, their state being unalterably fixed for ever;) on the other, survivors may be strengthened in their impiety, and the threatenings of God be made "of none effect."

But the objection may be started: What

right have we to entertain an unfavorable opinion, or to pronounce judgment, when all the evidence we have is to the contrary? The answer to this question turns upon another: Is that evidence satisfactory?

A pastorate of nearly twenty years has made me familiar with scenes of affliction. I can hardly remember a case in which sickness did not dispose the mind to think seriously of religion, especially when early associations had led that way. But how has it been with those who have returned to life again? They have left their religion in the chamber of affliction, and not a vestige of piety has remained to attest the genuineness of their conversion.

I have seen sinners brought to God amidst all the varieties of Christian experience; some by the terrors of the law, others by the attractions of the cross; some by a long and almost imperceptible process, others, comparatively, in a moment; but scarcely in a single instance have I found conversion, or even real awakening, dated from affliction. If ten were cleansed, where are the nine? "It has happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again, and the sow

that was washed to her wallowing in the mire," 2 Pet. ii. 22. Would that piety which could not stand the test of a return to life have availed the soul in death? Let conscience say.

I shall never forget an instance of disappointed hope which occurred in the early part of my career. A young man who had been instructed in a Sabbath-school as to the elements of religion, but had never made any pretension to piety, was stricken with an alarming disease. His concern about his soul was immediate and overwhelming. "What must I do to be saved?" seemed the one question which absorbed all his thoughts. Those around him did not fail to expound the reply of Paul and Silas — "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." He listened most intently; hope sprang up in his soul, and passages of scripture which he had learned at school, but which had till then escaped his memory, came pouring into his mind with a richness, propriety, and consecutiveness truly wonderful. Disease now gained upon him, and all hope of recovery fled. The surgeon plainly told him that nothing more could be done, and that a few hours would terminate his life. He received the announcement with per-

fect composure, and said that he had no wish to live, his only desire was to depart and be with Christ. Inexperienced as I then was, had he died, I should not have entertained a doubt of his safety. But the surgeon was mistaken: to the surprise of every one, his recovery was soon completed. He went to the house of God the first Sabbath he was able to walk, and returned thanks for his restoration. For the next few Sabbaths following he was there: afterwards I missed him. For some time I was unable to learn what had become of him; at last I ascertained that an act of gross immorality had rendered it expedient for him to leave the neighborhood.

After the lapse of twenty years, I very unexpectedly met with him once again. During the interval he had become a hardened sot. At the time of this interview, however, he was perfectly sober, but he appeared to have forgotten me. I reminded him of his vows in affliction. He then mentioned my name. I endeavored to recall his former impressions, but the attempt was hopeless; his conscience was seared, as with a hot iron; all I could get him to say of the affliction which once seemed so hopeful, was, "I have no wish to remember it."

CHAPTER II.

Never can it be too deeply impressed on the minds of all who are anxious to bring sinners to Christ, that health is the season of benefit, as well as usefulness. Of the man who amidst the excitements of life becomes awakened to an apprehension of his guilt and danger, we may entertain some reasonable hope ; but when cares for eternity come across the mind only when it has nothing else to engage it, the result is at best but doubtful. The sick demand our kindness, our sympathy, and our prayers ; but if we wish to save men's souls, our chief attention must be directed to those who need no other physician.

Through inattention to this point, some of the best energies of the church have been thrown away. Persons in all diseases, and in all stages of disease, have been eagerly sought out with the benevolent intention of showing them the way to heaven ; while the healthful inmates of the same dwelling have been left to pursue

their own path to hell without one word of entreaty or warning.

In many instances the visitation of the sick is perfectly useless. It is almost always so in fevers and diseases connected with delirium; and in cases where delirium is not apparent, there is often mental imbecility. I have attended persons in malignant fevers, who seemed perfectly conscious at the time, and exceedingly thankful for my visits, but who, on recovery, had not the slightest recollection of any thing that had taken place.

My design, in these remarks, is not to discourage attention to the sick, or in the slightest degree to justify any in neglecting them, but to show that the best season for labour is not that which is generally selected, and that time lost in health can seldom be redeemed in sickness.

There are many, who, when conscience tells them that they ought to do something for the salvation of their unconverted neighbors, postpone their efforts for affliction to prepare the way. The cares of life, they think, may then more readily be laid aside, and the attention exclusively directed to the things of eternity.

And moreover, at such a time, the call of a Christian neighbour for the express purpose of religious conversation will not be thought intrusive. "How glad I should be for my husband to be seriously ill!" said a poor woman one day, greatly to my surprise. On my asking a reason for so strange a wish, she replied, "O Sir, if he were ill, somebody would come and talk to him about his soul." The woman was too ignorant to have intended it as a personal rebuke; but may it not be the case, that while we account it a matter of imperative obligation to preach Christ to the sick and dying, we rarely say a word about him to those who need it not less than they?

Whatever may be its cause, the silence of Christians is the undoing of thousands. It may be indolence, it may be timidity, it may be mistaken affection, it may be mere procrastination without any assignable reason; but its results are the same, and those results are tremendous beyond description.

If we could get near enough to the prison-house of souls, 1 Pet. iii. 19, to listen to what is passing there, we should overhear conversations which would make our ears to tingle. It

is not improbable that our names are there associated with cursing and bitterness, and that the ruin of souls is ascribed to our negligence. We should hear one saying to his fellow-sufferer, "I had a Christian neighbour who lived next door to me eighteen years. He knew that I was regardless of religion, that I seldom attended public worship, and that I often made the holy day of the Lord a season of worldly pleasure, but he never reproved my sin. To his silence, I may trace my ruin. I remember the turning point in my life: it was the morning of a bright and beautiful day. A friend had invited me to an excursion. His chaise drove off with us at the moment my neighbour was leaving his door to go to the house of God. I would then have given the world to accompany him, but I had gone too far to retreat. How well I remember all that passed on that occasion! Oh, what a curse is memory now! God has set my sins 'in order' before mine eyes. There they are, in all their horrible minuteness of circumstance; not a single aggravation is forgotten. My thoughts, all that day, ran on the account to which I should certainly be called the next morning. I pondered over the best

excuses that my proud heart, or my vain imagination, could suggest. One was close confinement during the week, and the necessity of occasional recreation for the benefit of my health. Another, that the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. A third, (and it was this that gave me greater relief than either,) that it was only for once, that I never intended to do so again. Miserable was that day to me, and it was followed by a sleepless night. Conscience would not suffer me to slumber. But that was the last time conscience ever disturbed my rest. Monday morning came. My answers were ready. I prepared myself for the dreaded interview, and wished it over. Had my neighbour then treated me with affectionate fidelity, I had never gone on a Sunday's excursion again. I had already resolved that it should be the last time, and I wanted an opportunity of saying so. Judge then my astonishment, when I found that the religious friend, in whose eyes I had fancied myself degraded for ever, made not the slightest allusion to the manner in which I had passed the previous day! His silence, I unhappily regarded as the sanction of my sin. He was a kind neighbour,

and a good man, and I could not imagine that he would see my soul in peril without informing me. Fortified by his indifference, I reached the conclusion which has satisfied thousands. I thought religion good, but not indispensable. I regarded it as a thing about which every one should be fully persuaded in his own mind, and not make himself a busybody in other men's matters. I felt assured that with it my neighbour would go to heaven, and almost as certain that I should find my way thither without it. His conduct seemed to justify my opinion. For his habitual silence, I could account in no other way. During the lingering illness which brought my body to the grave, and my soul to this place of torment, there was hardly a day when I was not the subject of his kind inquiries. Yet not one word did he say about the claims of Christ, or the guilt and danger of neglecting the great salvation. The consequence is, that here I am, and here I must stay for ever. Who can lie down in everlasting burnings? But I have no other bed. Thanks to my Christian neighbour, for this awful doom! Had he been faithful to my soul, and warned me of the wrath to come, never had I been here."

"I, too," rejoins his companion in misery, "once had a religious friend, and that friend was my wife. I loved her with the tenderest affection, and believed that her love was no less tender than my own. Her piety was unquestioned. As she valued the ordinances of God, I constantly accompanied her to the sanctuary. At her request, I read prayers every morning and evening with our assembled household. It pleased her, and that was enough for me, for it was the study of my life to meet her views and anticipate her wishes. I heard her speak to others about Christ, and conversion, and eternity; but of these things she said not one word to me in a manner which indicated a suspicion that matters between my soul and God needed the slightest alteration. I gave myself credit for the piety which she evidently accorded me; and though I never went so far as to make a public profession of religion, I thought myself in a much better condition for doing so than many who did. Thus, life gently glided on till the illness overtook me of which I died. She then watched my bed with unwearied attention, spoke of the valley of the shadow of death, and of fearing no evil there, but never asked me on

what I was resting my hope for eternity. She took it for granted that I was right, and I thought so too. But she might have known that experimental religion never had charms for me, and that beneath an irreproachable character before men, I had but ill concealed a heart at enmity with God; she might have known this, and must have known it, had it not been that affection blinded her judgment; for there was nothing in me to warrant a belief that I had passed from death unto life. My virtues were those which a heathen might have practised, and remained a heathen still; and such a religion as mine might have existed had Christ never died. And thus I left the world. My last mortal recollection is that my dear wife kissed my cold cheek, and whispered in my ear, 'Farewell, my love, till we meet in heaven.' Meet in heaven? Never! If we meet, it will not be there."

"And I," adds a third, "am another victim of kindness; my parents loved me too tenderly to permit my salvation. I once was most fearfully alarmed about my soul; but they told me to beware of excitement, for it would injure my health: they cautioned me against enthusiastic

views of religion, and assured me that one so moral and virtuous had nothing to fear. I hearkened to their counsels; my convictions died away and never troubled me again. Through all the long months when consumption was running its course, I cherished the hope of recovery; not a word was said to undeceive me, till I awoke and found myself here. 'The harvest is past, the summer is over, and I am not saved.'"

I write not thus to awaken unavailing regrets. The dead are gone; they are beyond the reach of our repentance and our prayers: but the consciousness of having been accessories to their damnation may have a beneficial influence; it may teach us how to offer the prayer of David, when he thought of the murdered Uriah, "Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation," Psalm li. 14. It may do more: the doom of all the ungodly is not yet sealed. The man who was once within your reach is beyond it now; but he has left five brethren at home: the only amends you can make to him is to warn them. Gladly would he send a messenger from hell to do it, but he cannot; there is a great gulf between, Luke

xvi. 19—31. But that which he cannot do, you may accomplish ; you may prevent their going to that place of torment. Try.

It may be that these remarks will fall into the hands of one whose Sabbath-breaking neighbour, or whose unconverted husband, or whose consumptive child, is yet alive. Is it so? Go, then, reader, and tell him of his danger : tell him now, lest to-morrow it should be too late. Assure him of the necessity of salvation, and of the certainty of Christ's willingness to save, to save even him. You may yet render it impossible for him to lay his ruin to your charge ; yea, more than this—you may deliver his soul from death. "Go, and the Lord be with thee!" If you are afraid to tell him your fears, or know not how to express them, take this book in your hand, and ask him to read it : it may be, he will see his own likeness. If he should, assure him that the sketch is a faithful one, that the author intended him to see it, and prepared it for him, cherishing the hope that this image of his deformity would haunt him as a spectre, until he should become a new creature in Christ Jesus.

Conclusions involving responsibility so terrific as that which I have attempted to describe,

have been evaded by all the devices which ingenuity can furnish, or in which an uneasy conscience can promise itself repose. But conceal or mystify the awful fact as we may, souls are lost which might have been saved had the servants of Christ obeyed his orders. Divine sovereignty, the decrees of God, and "the election of grace," are not the things which stand in the way of the world's conversion: "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God; and not that he should return from his ways and live?" Ezek. xviii. 23.

Peter knew nothing of the subtleties of the schools, but he was filled with the Holy Ghost when he said, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain," Acts ii. 23. In his estimation, Divine foreknowledge afforded no excuse for human wickedness. And when the church resumes the zeal and devotedness of primitive times, it seems not unlikely that more attention than at present will be paid to inspired authority, and less deference be rendered to human systems of theology.

Let none say, Had we warned of their dan-

ger the souls which are now lost, the warning would have been unsuccessful. We have no right to cherish such a persuasion, and in no relation but this would it be tolerated for one moment. To show the justice of this assertion, suppose the following case:

Some rebels have been convicted of high-treason: the question of their guilt admits of no doubt, and if any deserve death for rebellion they do. The king, whose authority they had attempted to subvert, had been their personal friend, and had loaded them with favours: their treachery, therefore, had all the aggravation of the basest ingratitude: their condemnation excites no surprise; it was expected by every body. The fatal morning arrives, and crowds assemble to witness their execution: there is but one sentiment as to the atrocity of their crime, and no one imagines that their lives will be spared. The monarch, however, resolves to exercise his prerogative of mercy: as an act of pure sovereignty, he determines not only to spare, but on certain conditions, to offer them a full pardon. A great while before it is day, every thing is arranged for carrying into effect his gracious purpose: the necessary document

is no sooner prepared than it is put into the hands of one of the attendants in waiting, who is informed of its contents, and instructed to proceed on the errand of mercy with all possible despatch. There is time, abundant time for him to reach the place of intended execution before the fatal moment; but he loiters on the way. Who would imagine the charge with which he is intrusted? At length he arrives, but is just too late: the drop has fallen — the last struggle is over — the culprits have entered eternity! Let the crowd be told of his cruel indolence, and what would they say? The very men who thought the sentence a righteous one would charge him with being a murderer. Suppose that, to evade the imputation, he should unfold his commission, and say, "I deny it to be a pardon, it is only the offer of one, and it is such an offer as would not have been accepted; it contains some very humiliating conditions: the rebels, in order to be spared, were to make a full confession of their guilt; they were to go through the streets of the city, and to the gates of the palace, with ropes round their necks, acknowledging the justice of their original sentence, and ascribing the preserva-

tion of their lives to the royal clemency of him whose government they had attempted to subvert. I knew the men; I was perfectly assured that they would never submit to such terms as these, and therefore I thought it of little consequence whether I brought the document or not. On the whole, I regret that I came too late; but had I been earlier the result would have been the same." Can we imagine that the crowd would have patience to listen to such a defence? or, having heard it, would think it satisfactory? A thousand voices would exclaim, "Wretch! murderer! tell us not what those men would not have been willing to do; you were sent to give them an opportunity of being willing to do it; and as they lost that opportunity through your negligence, they owe their death to you." Should he escape being torn in pieces on the spot, what account would he give to the king who sent him? Would he dare to insinuate that if the offer of mercy had been made in sincerity, it would have been expressed in different terms, and committed to a more trustworthy messenger?

"If thou forbear to deliver them that are

drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not He that pondereth the heart consider it? and He that keepeth thy soul, doth not He know it? and shall not He render to every man according to his works?" Prov. xxiv. 11, 12.

A fearful rendering that will be to many who think not so. Amidst all the efforts which have been made to send forth missionaries and to translate the Scriptures into unknown tongues, few are the Christians who contribute as large a sum for the conversion of the world as is wrung from them in the shape of rates and taxes; and the man who gives to the service of God the same amount that he pays for the rental of his house is thought a prodigy of benevolence. Many a Christian tradesman would rather burn his books than show them to the Lord Jesus Christ; but he who espied Nathaniel under the fig-tree, John i. 48, has seen them already, and will render to every man according to his works. A scale of expenditure which pampers selfishness and gives benevolence the crumbs, must necessarily grieve the good spirit of God, and bring leanness into the soul.

But, after all, it is not here that the worst defect is found. Mean as the contributions of Christians in general to the treasury of God undoubtedly are, wonders would be accomplished if those contributions were given consistently; but they are not: the man bestows his guinea to save the heathen, but not a breath will he spend to save his friend or his servant, perhaps we may add, his wife or his child.

There are thousands of unconverted servants living in Christian households, for whose salvation not one determined effort has ever been made. Attendance at public worship and family prayer has been thought sufficient, and, in the absence of all other instrumentality, religious masters and mistresses have felicitated themselves on having done their duty: they have even thought that the commendation bestowed on Abraham would not be withholden from them: "I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord," Gen. xviii. 19.

I was once called to visit in her last illness a young woman of good understanding, who had lived three years in a professedly Chris-

tian family, and had all that time attended public and domestic worship as part of her agreement, but who did not know that she had a soul, or that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; her mistress had never given her that information. She went when others went, knelt when others knelt, heard all, and understood nothing: not one word of all the sermons and prayers she had attended had fastened on her mind, or excited a single inquiry. And it is by no means unlikely that the reader who thinks this statement improbable, would find within his immediate circle specimens of ignorance quite as appalling, if he would but give himself the trouble to search them out.

A very large portion of truth from the pulpit falls unheeded, because even the plainest language is not generally understood. Persons who have not made it a subject of inquiry would hardly believe the extent of popular ignorance as to the meaning of many words most commonly used in preaching the gospel. "Salvation," "redemption," "conversion," "atonement," "justification," "sanctification," and a hundred others of the same order, and without which we could not preach at all, con-

vey to the minds of multitudes no distinct, no definite impressions: they think of them as something belonging to religion, and not to common life, and that is all they know, or care to know, about the matter. And this deplorable ignorance is not confined to those whom we usually regard as uneducated. It prevails, to a fearful extent, among all classes, and includes not a few who pride themselves on their literary attainments. Some of our most popular writers have betrayed a lack of Christian knowledge which would disgrace a Sunday-school child of ten years old.

How can this difficulty be met? It never can be reached from the pulpit: to meet it there we must confine all our lessons to the mere alphabet of Christianity. Familiar conversation is the only thing which can bring home the plainest truths to minds so uninformed; and until this be undertaken as a matter of serious, personal obligation before God, by all who love the Lord Jesus Christ, their neighbours will continue to perish in their sins, and to them will belong the guilt of being accessories to their ruin.

CHAPTER III.

With all humility and tenderness, I would submit to my dear and honoured brethren in the ministry the question, Whether there must not be something radically wrong in that preaching, to which the unconverted can approvingly listen, year after year, and remain in their sins.

It may, perhaps, be replied, that the same event happened to Ezekiel, whose fidelity none will presume to question. "They come unto thee," saith the Lord to that prophet, "as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them. And lo! thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument; for they hear thy words, but they do them not," Ezek. xxxiii. 31, 32.

The relevancy of this passage to the case under consideration is, however, destroyed by the context. The men, who, as a matter of

necessity or courtesy, listened to the message, hated the prophet who brought it: they spoke against him "by the walls and in the doors of the houses," verse 30. The case of Ezekiel, then, after all, was no exception to the general rule. Like Moses, and Jeremiah, and Daniel, and a host of holy men, "of whom the world was not worthy," who "wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth," Heb. xi. 38, he found it impossible to serve God faithfully without provoking censure, and was included by Stephen in his sweeping challenge to the rulers of the Jews — "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?" Acts vii. 52.

We may boast of the enlightened age in which we live; but we deceive ourselves if we imagine that the world is yet so changed as to render obsolete the caution of our Lord to his disciples, — "Wo unto you when all men shall speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets," Luke vi. 26.

The commendation of an unconverted hearer is very questionable praise. It is possible, indeed, that the man may have information enough to acknowledge as truth the evidence of his

condemnation, or honesty enough to give us credit for the sincerity of our ministrations ; but it is far more likely that he endures our sermons, because they press but lightly on his conscience ; because we afford him so many opportunities of evading our appeals ; or because we invariably suffer him to hide himself in the crowd, and when we describe the man for whom there is no escape, because he neglects the great salvation, Heb. ii. 3, we carefully guard against every thing like personality, lest he should possibly imagine that we mean him.

But we do mean him, or ought to mean him, and the man will never be saved till he knows it. Should he not find it out from our public discourses, let us see him at home, and tell him so. We have often indirectly described his character, but still he has very little notion that the description applies to himself: we must remove from his mind all misapprehension, and with boldness, yet with affection and tenderness, say, "Thou art the man."

Is it demanded, Who can do this? I reply, That servant of Christ, who is found "warning every man, and teaching every man, in all wisdom," that he "may present every man per-

fect in Christ Jesus," Col. i. 28. The preacher who wishes to save himself and them that hear him, 1 Tim. iv. 16, must thus be made all things to all men, that he may by all means save some, 1 Cor. ix. 22. If sinners will take warning in the ordinary way, our work will be so much the lighter; but if public exhortations fail to produce the effect desired, we must adopt other methods, lest any one fail of the grace of God, Heb. xii. 15.

And under the influence of those powerful views of eternity which every man of God may be expected to cherish, it will, after all, be no very difficult matter to say to an unconverted hearer, "My friend, I have great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart on your account. You have now been hearing me a whole year, and I see no proof that you have been benefited by my labours. Have I bestowed upon you labour in vain? What more can I do to lead you to Christ? I must soon give an account to God of my watchfulness for the salvation of your soul: I want to do it with joy, and not with grief: for that would be unprofitable for you, Heb. xiii. 17. Must I tell him, that though I warned you, you would not hearken? — that,

though I entreated you, you would not comply? — that, though I besought you by the tender mercies of God to present your body a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable, that 'reasonable service,' Rom. xii. 1, you refused to render him, and strangely determined to die in your sins, notwithstanding all that infinite mercy had done for your redemption and conversion?"

If we are not prepared thus to fight at close quarters, are we good soldiers of Jesus Christ? 2 Tim. ii. 3. If we cannot thus commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God, are we fit for our work? are we making full proof of our ministry? It was thus that the apostles laboured; Acts xx. 20; 2 Cor. iv. 2; 1 Thess ii. 11, 12; 2 Tim. iv. 5; and if we aspire to their successes, we must emulate their toils.

But whatever may be the piety and devotedness of the ministers of the Gospel, the world will remain unsaved while the conversion of sinners is left to them. The mightiest armies would never have subdued a single province, had their officers been the only fighting men: it was theirs to direct the battle, but victory depended on the number, and training, and valour

of the main body, rank and file. And never, until private Christians become effective men, will the church of the living God look "forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."

When the leaven of popery is thoroughly purged away, the whole body of the faithful will awake to the fact that the communication of spiritual blessings is not the exclusive prerogative of a privileged order. It was not to bishops and deacons alone, but to all the elect strangers who were scattered throughout Pontius, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, whatever might be their worldly circumstances, or ecclesiastical appointments, that Peter said, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light," 1 Pet. ii. 9.

The church of modern times has never yet called into action one fiftieth part of the strength which it really possesses. Among its members there are hundreds, there are thousands, who have done nothing for Christ; they have never saved one soul from death, and no marvel, for

they have never made the attempt; their only notion of doing good has been to perform it by proxy; a donation, or annual subscription, to some public society for the spread of the Gospel, has been the total amount of their efforts for the conversion of the world: it seems never to have entered their thoughts that Christ has claims upon them for services which they can never perform by deputy, and that nothing can absolve them from personal obligation to bring sinners to repentance.

It was not thus that the ancient church achieved its triumphs. "Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord," Rom. xvi. 12; "and I entreat thee, true yokefellow, help these women which laboured with me in the Gospel, with Clement also, and with other of my fellow-labourers, whose names are in the book of life," Phil. iv. 3, are instructions which clearly indicate the comprehensive yet individual character of that coöperation which sustained and cheered an apostle, while from Jerusalem and round about unto Illyricum, he fully preached the gospel of Christ, Rom. xv. 19. The holy women, whose devoted exertions he mentions with so much approbation, were

forbidden to speak in the public assembly, 1 Cor. xiv. 34, 35, but they found methods of glorifying God in the domestic circle, and from house to house. Eternity alone will reveal the extent of their success.

A fine example of the working of this primitive system is found in the instance of Aquila and his wife Priscilla. By occupation they were tent-makers. An intimate acquaintance with the apostle of the Gentiles had given them advantages which few could boast, and which some would have been glad to monopolize. In the synagogue, at Ephesus, they met with an eloquent man, who was mighty in the Scriptures, but who knew only the baptism of John: they invited him home, and "expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." The consequence was, that Apollos went forth to water the enclosures which Paul had planted: talents which otherwise would have been lost to the church, were so employed that he "helped them much who had believed through grace, for he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ," Acts xviii. 28.

These remarks are not intended to weaken

the claims of religious institutions to pecuniary aid, nor are they designed to insinuate that the authority of the pastoral office is to be merged in the general effort of the whole church to bring sinners to God. It was the "rule" of an apostle to receive, from churches already organized, the pecuniary assistance by which he was enabled to preach the Gospel in the regions beyond them, 2 Cor. x. 15, 16; and his instructions imply, not only a division of labour, but a distinctness of instrumentality. "Having then gifts, differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness," Rom. xii. 6—8. Thus, in the primitive churches, the diversified "gifts" of the whole body of the faithful found room for their appropriate exercise without intrenching on "another man's line of things:" and, with a moderate share of wisdom, the same thing may still be accomplished: each may work distinctly, and all may work unitedly.

The direction with which the apostle concludes the instructions already quoted — "Let love be without dissimulation" — is a rule which will enable us to conduct the most extensive and multifarious operations, without even the possibility of clashing, or the slightest approach to any thing like disorder. Thus, "without murmurings or disputings," the members of the church at Philippi held forth the word of life, and shone as lights in the world, "in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation," Phil. ii. 15, and of their brethren at Thessalonica was borne this high and honourable testimony — "From you sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place," 1 Thess. i. 8.

It will surely not be pretended that opportunities of usefulness are less frequent, or less inviting, now, than they were in apostolic days. On the contrary, we have means and facilities of holy enterprise with which the primitive Christians were not indulged, and of which they were unable to form a conception; and the highest amount of peril to which we may expose ourselves, in provoking the hatred of the world, bears not a comparison with the risk

which they incurred who thought their trials light so long as they had not "resisted unto blood," Heb. xii. 4, and who, when called to that last and highest act of discipleship, counted not their lives dear unto them, so that they might finish their course with joy, Acts xx. 24. Murdered by the savages of Erromanga, the names of Williams and Harris will go down to posterity, like those of Stephen and James the brother of John, crowned with the honours of martyrdom; but in general, if our missionaries go forth at the hazard of their lives, it is from other causes than "perils by the heathen." In many instances, the objects of their compassion are waiting to welcome them to their shores; and, from more quarters than, according to the present rate of exertion, can possibly receive attention, the prayer of the man of Macedonia floats on the breeze — "Come over and help us."

The modes of useful employment, moreover, are now so diversified as to embrace all possible varieties of talent and opportunity, so that no disciple of Christ has a right to say, "I pray thee, have me excused." As when the ancient idolaters made cakes for the queen of heaven,

they found something for every one to do, so may we: the children may gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, Jer. vii. 18: the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the learned and the illiterate, may here make common cause, and become "fellow-helpers to the truth," 3 John, 8.

Yet, notwithstanding all the facilities with which Providence has favoured us, many who pass for Christians content themselves with praying for the conversion of the world, while they neglect the only instrumentality by which it can be accomplished. The angels of heaven will never become pastors of churches or missionaries to the heathen: "we have this treasure in earthen vessels," 2 Cor. iv. 7; and if the nations are to have the treasure, we must not only supply the vessels which contain it, but we must keep them in repair.

To ask that God would bring the world to the faith of Christ, while we know that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," Rom. x. 17; and moreover, that the millions have no word of God to hear, and, therefore, that there is nothing for Divine agency to work upon, is (if we at the same time withhold

from them the words whereby they may be saved) but to stultify our own prayers. As well may we ask for the showers and sunshine of heaven to bring on the harvest where the fallow ground remains unbroken and unsown: the showers and the sunshine may come, but no harvest will follow.

It becomes, then, a serious question, Are we putting forth an agency which God *can* bless? All abstract reasoning concerning his power is irrelevant. As a mere question of almightiness, we know that God can create the "herb bearing seed," and grain for the use of man, without the labours of the husbandman: he did so in the first instance, before there was a human being to aid his plans or witness his operations; but has he done so since man was made to till the ground? The question requires no answer. He gives us "fruitful seasons" still, "filling our hearts with food and gladness," Acts xiv. 17; but his bounties need the labour, the forecast, and the constant industry of man, in order to their production. The husbandman, who laboureth first, is partaker of the fruits: he must plough the ground and sow the seed, or he will never reap the harvest, 2 Tim. ii. 6.

Between the laws of the natural and those of the spiritual world there is an analogy more strict than some theological notions would lead us to suppose. Faith, as we have seen, comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God: the word must be heard in order to accomplish its design; and where it is unheard, or something else is heard in its stead, there the blessing of Heaven neither will nor can attend it.

As there are certain conditions of seed in which it cannot vegetate, so there are certain conditions of the word in which it cannot issue in eternal life. As the germinating principle in grain may be destroyed by mildew, damp, or vermin, and the finest wheat become fit only for the dunghill, the message of mercy from Heaven may be so corrupted by the devices of men as to become a doctrine of devils, 1 Tim. iv. 1; the truth of God may be changed into a lie, Rom. i. 25; his grace may be turned into lasciviousness, Jude 4; and a preacher may so pervert the Gospel of Christ, even by his misrepresentation of institutions unquestionably divine, that Paul would pronounce him accursed, Gal. i. 8, 9. "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" But they may do both,

before the preaching of legal justification, and sacramental grace, will convert souls to God.

All the genial influences of rain, and dew, and sunshine, will never cause that seed to vegetate of which the vital germ has perished; and though Jehovah is as the dew unto Israel, Hos. xiv. 5, and gracious influences "come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth," Psa. lxxii. 6, no blessing will arise where truth has lost its vitality. That vitality lost, it is truth no more, as grain is seed no longer when its germinating property is destroyed.

Divine truth, in its integrity, has a vitality, an inherent principle of life, of which fruit unto life eternal is but the natural result. Thus, our blessed Lord, addressing some of his disciples who murmured at him and were offended at his doctrine, said, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life," John v. 63.

If we set our hearts on occupying the field of the world to cultivate it for God, we should carefully ascertain whether that which we have is really "the seed of the kingdom." Its genuineness admits of an easy test. Does it spring,

and grow, and produce, first the blade, and then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear? Or, to speak parables no longer, are our labours for God eminently distinguished by the conversion of souls? This is the purpose for which God sent his truth to our world; and if it answers not that purpose, "it is become of none effect." Should any question the correctness of this assertion, I would remind them that in a darker dispensation than ours, when only a small portion of Divine revelation had been given to the church, such was even then its design, and enough was there to secure that end. The law of the Lord was perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord was sure, making wise the simple, Psa. xix. 7.

And wherever that truth retains its purity, it retains its power; heavenly influences are waiting to bless it, and God demands that his servants shall so obey his orders, and execute his will, as to place the world in a condition to receive and enjoy his measureless benediction. "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house; and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour

you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it," Mal. iii. 10: "for as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it," Isa. lv. 10, 11.

But, to revert to the figure recently employed, the best seed will not grow while it remains in the granary. Would we raise a harvest for God? We must break up the fallow ground, and carry forth the seed of the kingdom from our closets and depositories, and scatter it abroad, where it may bring forth much fruit.

Should the result, after all, disappoint us, it behooves us, as wise husbandmen, to ascertain the cause. Is the fault in the seed, or in the soil, in the seasons, or in our mode of culture? The seasons are such as God promised they should be, and, every year since the beginning of the world, there have been both seed-time and harvest; and the soil, whatever its defects

may be, is no worse than that which has yielded many a crop in former times — in some thirty, in some sixty, and in some a hundred fold. If, therefore, we labour in vain, and spend our strength for nought, our seed must be bad, or our plans injudicious.

There is one point, indeed, in which all analogies drawn from nature completely fail. I refer now to the moral qualifications of the required human agency. In the natural world, one event happens to all, Eccl. ii. 14: the sun rises on the evil and on the good, and the rain descends on the just and on the unjust, Matt. v. 45. The swearer, the drunkard, the fornicator, or the atheist, may (if he will employ the same diligence of culture) reap as early and as large a harvest as his Christian neighbour; but the seed of the kingdom rarely vegetates when it falls from a polluted hand, and the most awful truths of God seldom produce any permanent impression when they go forth from feigned lips. "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord," Prov. xv. 8; their new moons, and their appointed feasts, his soul hateth, Isa. i. 14; and, by parity of reasoning, it may be shown that the imperfections and

weaknesses of real Christians are oftentimes a fearful hinderance in the way of the Gospel.

It may be devoutly questioned, whether indeed God can extensively bless the efforts of his people until they are prepared to receive and improve the blessing which he designs to bestow. The only limits of his power are those which are set by his own wisdom, holiness, goodness, and truth; it is, therefore, no disparagement of his omnipotence to affirm that he cannot lie, Titus i. 2, as it was no discredit to the miracles of Christ that on one occasion "he did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief, Matt. xiii. 58. "He laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them," (compare Mark vi. 5,) to show them that his power was as great as ever; upon only a few, to convince them that the hinderance was all their own. But few came, for few had faith to be healed; but of those who did come, not one was refused.

Something analogous to this may be seen in our churches now: a few are converted, that men may see that the hand of the Lord is not shortened that it cannot save; and only a few, to teach his people that their iniquities have

separated between them and their God, and their sins have hid his face from them, Isa. lix. 1, 2. And, to carry the parallel yet further, it may be affirmed that if, notwithstanding the indifference and unbelief of those who ought to be the salt of the earth and the lights of the world, any sinner should desire salvation, he may have it. Should but one of a village, or one of a city, or one of a nation, offer in sincerity the prayer, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me," Jesus will come and heal him.

Individual conversion, wherever it is seen, affords demonstrative evidence that the Lord is there. Let but the instances be multiplied, and then we have "times of refreshing," Acts iii. 19. Suppose them to occur on the largest scale imaginable, and then we realize the visions of the latter day, when "the wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock, and dust shall be the serpent's meat," Isa. lxv. 25. All that shall in reality distinguish that day from our own will be, that the people shall be all righteous, chap. lx. 21, and know the Lord from the least of them unto the greatest, Jer. xxxi. 34.

And why are the triumphs of that day

delayed? We need no new revelation from Heaven to inform us. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise; his faithfulness remains unshaken, and his truth endures for ever and ever. But hinderances are found, on the part of Christians themselves, which are quite sufficient to account for all; they must be awakened before others will be aroused; the demon of unbelief must be cast out of the faithful, before they can exorcise the infidelity of the world.

A vessel in ballast dares not spread her canvass to the breeze as she can when deeply laden; for the gale which would be propitious to the freighted merchantman, to her would bring destruction. There are some states of mind in which extensive usefulness would become a snare and a curse; and we may imagine that God loves his saints too well to place them in such peril: we hardly can expect him to bless us above that which we are able to bear. If success would engender pride, if usefulness to the souls of others would induce us to neglect our own, we cannot wonder that nothing comes of our labours.

These remarks gather force from the fact

that special prayer has always preceded special blessings: prayer has prepared the way for those blessings; it has placed the church in a condition to receive them. There was previously no unwillingness on the part of God; he was waiting to be gracious, waiting to have compassion, desiring not the death of sinners, but rather that they should turn from their wickedness, and live: but the church was not ready for the blessing, and therefore it was withheld.

Brethren, are these things true? Then you and I have been standing in the way of the world's conversion: sinners have been perishing around us, because we have been unfit to be intrusted with their salvation. With us it has been a question of success or non-success; but to them it has been a question of life or death, of heaven or hell. It is true that not one has died in his sins, but has justly perished by his own iniquity; but that is no excuse for us. Their guilt cannot justify our negligence. Only God knows how fearful will be the disclosures of that day in which he will make inquisition for the blood of the slain.

Paul, on a memorable occasion, declared him-

self "pure from the blood of all men." But on what grounds? Because he had not shunned to declare unto them all the counsel of God, and by the space of three years, had ceased not to warn every one, night and day, with tears, Acts xx. 26, 27, 31. It is therefore but a fair inference, that had he been unfaithful to the truth, or remiss in its propagation, the blood of souls would have been laid to his account. Let not this assertion be charged with extravagance: it is but the testimony of God himself. "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel, therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die, and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand," Ezek. iii. 17, 18.

But if we aim at nothing beyond exemption from bloodguiltiness, we set our mark too low. A man who is no murderer, may yet be a very profitless member of the community. The constant study of Christians, in relation to the unconverted, should be to turn them from dark-

ness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God. This may be done, and Christ has sent them to do it. (Compare Acts xxvi. 18, with Matt. v. 16.) Let them attempt it in faith, and he will bless their efforts to that end. James v. 19, 20.

There are some, however, who question, and even deny, the connexion between fidelity and success; and they endeavour to prove their position by a reference to the personal ministry of our blessed Lord. They tell us that he stretched forth his hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people, Rom. x. 21; that it was his lamentation, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life," John v. 40; "How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not;" Luke xiii. 34; and they refer us to the hundred and twenty disciples assembled at Jerusalem after his resurrection, Acts i. 15, as the whole product of his labours.

Much might be said to prove that the popular notion of the unsuccessfulness of his personal ministry is incorrect; that though only one hundred and twenty names were enrolled at Jerusalem, many, like Joseph of Arimathea,

were his disciples, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, John xix. 38; that Paul mentions his having been "seen of above five hundred brethren at once," 1 Cor. xv. 6, who, after all, were only chosen witnesses, selected, as it may be fairly presumed, from a much greater number, Acts x. 41; that his main object in going over the towns and cities of Judea, was to lay the foundation of his future kingdom, and to enable his servants, after his ascension to heaven, to challenge the disproof of their statements, while they affirmed of the facts which their testimony embraced, and from which they derived their authority, "These things were not done in a corner." But I wave all these considerations, and meet the objection as it stands.

Admit that the hundred and twenty, and those of their former companions who had "fallen asleep," were the only fruits of his toils, yet will the total result present an average amount of usefulness with which the successes of few of his servants will bear a comparison. Here would be a soul for every Sabbath of his public life. Rare, indeed, have been the instances in which his most favored disciples have been honoured with equal success.

I confess that I write these remarks with a trembling hand. There seems something bordering on the profane in an attempt to measure our success with his. If the Socinian hypothesis were correct, and he came only as a teacher sent from God, a man of like passions with ourselves, to show unto us the way of salvation, the comparison would be legitimate; but its result would still be very humbling: his would be an example of success before which the greater part of his most devoted followers must hide their heads. But when we remember that the grand design of his mission was to bear our sins in his own body on the tree, 1 Pet. ii. 24; that the rejection of his testimony and the personal insults which he bore were part of those sufferings through which it became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect; (compare Heb. ii. 10, with Isa. liii. 4;) that he even took our infirmities that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people, Heb. ii. 17; that he suffered being tempted, that he might be able to succour the tempted, ver. 18;

when we remember these things, and view them in relation to his great sacrifice on the cross, the question of the number of souls saved by his personal ministry, infinitely important to themselves as their salvation undoubtedly was, dwindles into insignificance.

Let it moreover be borne in mind, that his life and labours have formed the text-book of all who have been successfully engaged, from that day until now, in saving the souls of men; and that, by anticipation, to him gave "all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." Acts x. 43. Let us give to these considerations but a moderate share of attention, and then dare we form a low estimate of his success? He finished the work which was given him to do, John xvii. 4, and the pleasure of the Lord prospered in his hand. Isa. liii. 10.

But further: he expressly stated, "He that believeth on me, the works that I do, shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father," John xiv. 12. This is a declaration which evidently refers to augmented success in the conversion of souls; for, in so far as miraculous agency was con-

cerned, his disciples, not excepting the apostles themselves, never did works greater than his own; the fulfilment of the promise is therefore found in the fact that when he was glorified, the Holy Ghost was thenceforth given to render each of his disciples a source of blessings to the world, a fountain of living waters to the universe, John vii. 38, 39.

It may, perhaps, be further objected that the success of the apostles was not invariable; that there were mockers at Athens, though Paul was the preacher; Acts xvii. 32; that some to whom his warmest appeals were directed, judged themselves "unworthy of everlasting life;" chap. xiii. 46; and that he alluded, with tears, to many who, after all his labours for their salvation, remained enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction. Phil. iii. 18, 19.

The facts are unquestionable, but when they are adduced to disprove the connexion between fidelity and success, they are cited in vain; for, with the primitive church, success was the rule, failure the exception. At Athens, some dared to mock when the apostle preached "the resurrection of the dead," but others received the word with gladness. His success, even there,

was such as would delight the heart of many a devoted missionary now, even though all his exertions besides should have been unproductive. Dionysius, the Areopagite, a member of the highest spiritual court in the pagan world, was no mean convert; and he was not the only one; Damaris and others were left to testify to their heathen neighbours, that a prophet of "the unknown God" had passed that way, and had told them of the great sacrifice which, once for all, had been laid upon his altar to take away the sins of the whole world. If Paul's kindred in the flesh rejected his testimony, he turned to the Gentiles. Acts xiii. 46. And if he wept over some, because he had bestowed on them labour in vain, to how many did he say, "Our hope, our joy, our crown of rejoicing, are ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?" 1 Thess. ii. 19. Their number will never be known till that day shall declare it.

Nor should it be forgotten that the formidable opposition with which the apostles had to contend, instead of disheartening, impelled them to new and persevering efforts. They saw arrayed against them the fatuity of ignorance

on the one side, and the pride of intellect on the other. The Sadducees of their day were as flippant and as reckless as any of our modern materialists; and Peter, in his second epistle, describes an order of things quite as appalling as any with which infidelity would embody its idea of a new moral world. Yet these were the materials which, transformed into living stones, were brought together to build "a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ," 1 Peter ii. 5. In preaching the Gospel, Paul considered himself "a debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise," Rom. i. 14; and he included converted infidels and sensualists, of all possible varieties, when he said, "And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." 1 Cor. vi. 11.

But who that is competent to form an opinion on the subject, can say that success is now the rule, and failure still the exception? The state of things in this respect is fearfully changed. To say nothing of the neglected and profligate

world, multitudes attend the preaching of the gospel all their days, and live and die without religion. Unregenerated thousands dwell in the midst of Christian associations and Christian ordinances, year after year, and remain in their sins till death summons them to judgment and consigns them to everlasting flames. And this is now regarded so much as a matter of course, that when, amidst a population of some tens of thousands, a few hundreds are really awakened to a sense of their guilt, and are induced to flee for refuge to the hope set before them, the church stands astonished at so extraordinary a circumstance, and the whole country rings with news of a revival.

Far be it from me to discourage the feeling of exultation which such a fact should excite. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth," Luke xv. 10; and if we cannot sympathize with angels, we shall never be admitted to their fellowship. The man to whom the conversion of sinners affords no delight, is himself "in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity." We cannot but rejoice in the conversion of others, if we have been converted ourselves. But why

should this our joy so seldom be fulfilled? Why should the occasions of holy triumph be so few and far between? In other words, why should not the condition which we term revival, be the ordinary condition of our churches?

It is easy to get rid of the difficulty by imputing it to the government of God. So many have done, and have persuaded themselves that the salvation of the world is no business of theirs: but let us take heed how we charge God foolishly. Adam could find a similar reasan for eating the forbidden fruit — "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat," Gen. iii. 12; but the excuse did not avail him: God did not even deign to notice it; and whatever may be our opinions now, a day is coming, when to stand in the place of the slothful servant, and say, "Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed," will be a certain presage of "outer darkness," where "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," Matt. xxv. 24, 30.

There seems, on the part of some, to be an extreme reluctance, even to acknowledge the

adaptation of divine ordinances, or, as they are more commonly called, the means of grace, to the purposes for which they were designed. To such persons it appears almost sacrilegious to place together, in the relation of cause and effect, the preaching of the Gospel and the conversion of men. A similar relation they can see and admire throughout the world of nature, and, so far from regarding it as involving a suspicion that the Creator has withdrawn from the universe and abandoned it to chance, they consider it a proof of his constant presence there. But oh, the presumption of attempting to trace effects to their causes when religion is concerned! In that department of his government, it would seem, we have nothing to do with causes; they all resolve themselves into one simple fact—the sovereignty of God.

Few would assert this in so many words, but many think so, and a great many more, who are quite unconscious of entertaining such an opinion, act as if they thought so. With them, all usefulness, all success, so far as their agency is concerned, is quite accidental: the bow is drawn at a venture; if the arrow should strike, so much the better, and a wondrous proof that

God directed its flight: if it should fall to the ground before it can take effect, or completely miss the mark, they never suspect that the reason might be their want of strength, or of skill, or of both; they even make their carelessness the ground of self-complacency, and fancy that they honour God by thus "ceasing from man," and placing, as they tell us, no dependence upon "means." And some who would loudly exclaim against these absurdities, have nevertheless suffered their jealousy for the honour of God to carry them to dangerous extremes: they have magnified his power at the expense of his wisdom, and have even contended for the divine authority of the Gospel on the ground of its incongruity: thus attempting to prove that God has sent it, because it accomplishes that for which it has neither fitness nor adaptation.

The assertion of Paul concerning the "foolishness of preaching," 1 Cor. i. 21, has, in some quarters, been grossly misapprehended. His argument, correctly understood, will no more warrant such an assumption, than it will that foolishness and wickedness may be predicated of the ever-blessed God, verse 25. By "the foolish things," "the weak things," and "the

base things of the world," verses 27, 28, he means not things which are really such, but things which are so regarded by men of high repute for their worldly wisdom; and, to end all doubt as to his intention, he expressly declares that which the Jews thought a stumbling-block, and the Greeks accounted foolishness, to be "the power of God, and the wisdom of God," verse 24.

The message of reconciliation is admirably adapted to effect the gracious intention of Him who sent it; the "faithful saying" is "worthy of all acceptation," 1 Tim. i. 15; and that men should need the influences of the Holy Spirit to dispose them to receive it, is but a proof, and perhaps the most fearful one we have, of the extent of human depravity. On other subjects, and as to other matters, self-love is a motive almost resistless: convince a man that your advice will greatly promote his advantage, and he will want no further reason for its immediate adoption; but as to religion, the indisposition of the heart survives the enlightenment of the understanding: many know the claims of God, but never obey them; they comprehend the

message of mercy, but never believe to the salvation of the soul.

It is a great error, in relation to this state of mind, to regard it simply as a matter of helplessness. It is not helplessness, it is depravity, and, as such, deserves the ruin which it brings. "How can we turn to God until he gives us his Holy Spirit, and makes us willing in the day of his power?" is the plausible inquiry of thousands, while they are daily resisting the Holy Ghost, Acts vii. 51. They are refusing the gift for which they pretend to be waiting, and there is not one among them who has not already resisted and put away an amount of Divine testimony, which, if welcomed and followed out, would have been sufficient to bring the whole world to the faith of Christ.

To plead before Him who sends the Holy Spirit, a destitution of Divine influence as an excuse for neglecting or disobeying his will, is but to add insult to rebellion; and when they can do it who know that Jesus said, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Luke xi. 13, their conduct pre-

sents a specimen of infatuation hardly to be equalled in the universe. I demand of these patient waiters for divine influences, how they are waiting: whether they are waiting as the disciples did, "with one accord in prayer and supplication; Acts i. 14; or like the Jews, who, after all the mighty works which they had heard and seen, had the audacity to say to Jesus, "How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly," John x. 24.

In religious inquiry, different states of mind lead to very different results; to one class of inquirers Jesus said, "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given to it but the sign of the prophet Jonas," Matt. xii. 39; while he assured another, that if any man will do the will of the Father who sent him, he shall know the doctrine whether it be of God, John vii. 17.

And if the pretence of waiting for the Holy Spirit will not excuse the impenitent in refusing to submit to Christ, neither will it justify the indolence of Christians in delaying to "work the work of God." If we have not the Spirit of Christ, we are none of his, Rom. viii. 9; and if we are his, we "are led by the

Spirit," verse 14 ; we " walk in the Spirit," Gal. v. 16 ; and we are expected, and even commanded, to be " filled with the Spirit." The obligation of this attainment is as binding as it is to abstain from drunkenness, Eph. v. 18 ; and that it should not be so accounted is a melancholy proof that the church has degenerated as to its standard of piety : yet is the fact undeniable, that to " come behind " in a gift so essential to the progress of religion and the conversion of the world, is, by the faithful themselves, esteemed a calamity, but not a disgrace. Often has that been ascribed to the mysteries of Providence, or the sovereignty of God, for which an apostle would find another and a more humiliating solution : " Ye have not, because ye ask not ; ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss," James iv. 2, 3.

Many, who are loud in their complaints as to their destitution of the cheering and quickening influences of the Holy Spirit, would be ashamed to state the time and the manner in which they are accustomed to seek them : the neglected closet, the careless confession, and the drowsy prayer, would account for all ; and

the wonder is, not that the Holy Spirit has been grieved, but that he has not taken his flight for ever.

Others, against whom the charge of negligence is not so clear, desire the Holy Spirit, but it is only to make them happy, not to make them useful. They have been seeking Divine influences all their lives without any sensible improvement in the happiness which they so earnestly desire. The reason is apparent — selfishness is their real motive : the influences which they implore are sought for home consumption, not for distribution ; for mere enjoyment, not for holy activity. This is the very thing which, in the passage recently quoted, is assigned as a reason why prayer itself is sometimes unproductive — " That ye may consume it upon your lusts," or, as the margin reads, " on your pleasures." Thus was Israel " an empty vine," he brought forth " fruit unto himself," Hosea x. 1.

It is not unlikely that some Christians cherish a notion that the chief design of the Holy Spirit is to make them happy, on the ground that he was described by our Lord, and promised to the church, as " the Com-

forter." It is true that this is one meaning of παράκλητος, the word so rendered in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters of the Gospel by John : but it is not the only meaning of that word, and perhaps is not even the best that might have been selected. It is used only once again in the New Testament, and then, as in the present instance, it comes from the pen of the beloved disciple. Now, it seems hardly probable, that, in reporting the discourses of Christ through the medium of another tongue, extremely diverse from that in which they were spoken, he would employ a word, and especially an unusual one, in a sense very remote from that in which he was accustomed to use it himself ; yet, in his epistle it is rendered " Advocate," 1 John ii. 1, a term which would better suit the sense in every instance where it occurs in the Gospel, than " Comforter " would do to take its place in the epistle.

Comparing the passages together, it seems a just conclusion, that as Christ is the advocate, or representative of his people in heaven, so the Holy Spirit is the advocate, or representative of Christ upon earth. The plea is in both

instances the same, — the sacrifice of Calvary. "Jesus Christ, the righteous," pleads that sacrifice with God on behalf of man, Heb. ix. 24, and the Holy Spirit pleads it with man on behalf of God. "Forasmuch as ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ," 1 Pet. i. 18, 19, is the argument which he sustains with groanings which cannot be uttered. Rom. viii. 26. And when that argument reaches the heart, "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" 1 Cor. ii. 4, the inquiry, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" is the immediate and necessary consequence.

CHAPTER IV.

If Jesus were still a man of sorrows, not having where to lay his head, Piety might spread him a table and provide him a home. Affection might weave for him the seamless garment, or break the alabaster box of ointment of spikenard, very precious, and so anoint him for his burial. Poverty herself might wash his feet with her tears, and wipe them with her hair. At the end of his sojourn, Wealth might find him a new sepulchre, hewn in the rock, where never man was yet laid. And as a final act of homage, Gratitude might bring her spices and ointments, about a hundred pounds weight, as the manner was of the Jews to bury. But these offerings now, like the last, would all be unseasonable. He needed not the skill of the embalmers when he had risen from the dead, and he requires not our personal ministrations now he has ascended to glory.

Yet are there services still more important, still more essential, which he allows us to render him, and which he expects at our hands.

The spirit of his parting charge to Peter may be considered as extending through all time. "Lovest thou me?"—"feed my sheep:" "Lovest thou me?"—"feed my lambs," John xxi. 15—17. If he has "other sheep to bring which are not of this fold," to us is intrusted the instrumentality which shall guide them to his feet. And the day in which his church shall have subdued the world to his faith and fear, is that in which "he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." Isa. liii. 11.

The glory of Christ must be our grand motive while we attempt the conversion of sinners. To save their souls from death is a noble enterprise, but it derives its highest character from the honour which it brings to him who is the resurrection and the life. Is Jesus my Lord? Then others shall obey him. Is he the propitiation for our sins? Then "not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." 1 John ii. 2.

The fact of his infinite sacrifice is the ground of his universal claim; and if we would lay hold of the consciences of men with a firm grasp, we must boldly state it, notwithstanding

all the objections of the schoolmen. Some may suspect our orthodoxy, and others think us mad, but our defence is ready. "For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again," 2 Cor. v. 13—15.

If metaphysical subtleties prevent our saying to men who afterwards are found to perish in unbelief, "God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities," our theology is not precisely that of the apostolic school, for this is a faithful rendering of the very words of Peter when addressing a most hopeless assembly, Acts iii. 26. His hearers, on that occasion, were persons who had not only rejected the testimony of Christ, but their unbelief having survived the day of Pentecost, they had also bidden defiance to the Holy Ghost. Surely, if any circumstances would justify caution and reserve, such were these.

Yet he boldly claims the men who had "denied the Holy One and the Just," and "desired a murderer to be granted" unto them, and had "killed the Prince of life;"—and he claims them on the broad ground of God's gracious purpose that every one of them should be converted. Many who listened felt the appeal, and the total number of converts soon amounted to five thousand.

In taking this course, Peter only followed the example of his Lord, who, although he "knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him," John vi. 64, said to those who had not the love of God in them, and who would not go to him that they might have life, "These things I say, that ye might be saved," chap. v. 34.

Let our appeals to the consciences of men be equally unfettered, and then, and not till then, we shall "preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus," Col. i. 28. Since he "gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time," 1 Tim. ii. 6, let us, in proclaiming that testimony, tell the world, that God our Saviour "will have all men

to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth," verses 3, 4. If ever we have a right to assume an air of confidence, it is when we are treading in the footsteps of inspiration. And where can these be plainer? On few subjects, however, are the notions of the hearers of the Gospel so perverse and contracted as they are in relation to the grace of God. Awakened sinners often ask, with intense anxiety, whether they have a right to do that which God has made a matter of solemn, and awful, and universal obligation. A right to repent! when God has commanded "all men everywhere," to do it? Acts xvii. 30. A right to submit to Christ! when God has sworn that to him every knee shall bow? (Compare Isa. xlv. 21; John v. 21; Rom. xiv. 11.) A right to believe the Gospel! when "he that believeth not shall be damned," Mark xvi. 16, and is, in fact, "condemned already?" John iii. 18.

It would seem that some very plain things require to be made yet plainer, ere the world, ere the church itself, will receive them. A pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeds from the throne of God and of the Lamb. The Spirit says, "Come." Then let

the bride say, "Come." Let all that hear say, "Come." And then he that is athirst shall come, and whosoever will, shall "take the water of life freely." Rev. xxii. 17.

The gracious invitations of the Gospel must be made, not only the subject of pulpit discourse, but of social converse. The disciples of Christ must daily press his claims on the attention of all within their reach. The distinction between the church and the world will then be more broadly drawn, and many will say, "We will go with you, for God is with you."

Is this too hard a service to be required at our hands? If any think so, let them ask whether, when for the time they ought to be teachers, they do not need that some one should teach them again the first principles of the oracles of God. The obligation before us is not peculiar to Christianity, it belonged to the ancient dispensation: "These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up," Deut. vi. 6, 7. Here we

have a clear and ample direction as to this important duty. The grand truths of religion are to furnish matter for our lessons to the young, for our social converse, for our general discourse, and for our private meditation. And the force of this precept, so far from having been impaired by the lapse of ages, is vastly augmented. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son," Heb. i. 1, 2; and "this is the message which we have heard of him,"—"that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all; but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin," 1 John i. 5, 7. The dispensation of types and shadows has given place to "a kingdom which cannot be moved." Heb. xii. 28. We have stores of information, lessons of instruction, facilities of labour, and motives to exertion, such as the fathers of Israel never knew. It becomes therefore the paramount duty of every Christian to obtain and to diffuse religious information.

The grand matters of faith and holiness lie

within a narrow compass. A large amount of knowledge, however desirable in order to usefulness, is not essential. The little maid who waited on Naaman's wife, was probably no remarkable specimen of intelligence, but she was able to say, "Would God, my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria, for he would recover him of his leprosy." The expression of that wish led to its fulfilment; Naaman went to Elisha and was healed.

It must, however, be borne in mind, that though a moderate portion of knowledge may suffice, wisdom is indispensable; and the only wisdom which will answer the purpose, is that which cometh from above, and "is first pure, then peaceable," James iii. 17. Worldly policy will do nothing here. But "if any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him," chap. i. 5. And in no case can we implore that blessing with so much confidence of Divine approval, or with such certainty of success, as when we ask it in order to lead sinners to Christ.

In following out that glorious design, different modes of treatment must be adopted, with

different persons, and on different occasions. To pursue the same plan in every instance, would be absurd and even ridiculous. All need the same salvation, but all cannot be reached by the same methods of address. The young, the timid, the hopeful, and the inquiring, would be disheartened and alarmed, by that which in the case of the careless, the hardened, and the profane, would approve itself as the most ready, if not the only way of securing attention.

Invaluable opportunities of usefulness often occur in travelling, and Christians should study to turn them to the best account. On such occasions, general remarks on religion will seldom do much good, or obtain any thing in reply beyond Yes or No. It will be found a much better plan to come to the point at once, and, although addressing a perfect stranger, to say, without the slightest preface or apology, "Do you care any thing about your soul?" "Pray, what are your views of religion?" "Do you love the Lord Jesus Christ?" "Have you a good hope through grace?" The very abruptness of the inquiry will awaken attention, and probably elicit a reply which you

may make the text of your observations for the remainder of a long journey. If, however, you wish to accomplish your object, you must speak with firmness, and not as if you were saying something of which you were half ashamed. Make the inquiry just in the same tone and manner as you would say, "Have you heard of the dreadful fire last night?" — "Can you tell me how many persons were burned to death?"

All attempts of this kind, to be successful, must be put forth in a modest and affectionate manner: any thing which would seem like saying, "Stand by thyself, for I am holier than thou," would do more harm than good; and we had better hold our peace, even from good things, while the wicked is in our sight, than thus cause our good to "be evil-spoken of;" but let it be seen that we really aim to do them good, and even the most abandoned will usually listen to what we have to say, and sometimes express a feeling of gratitude. It is, however, important to remark, that in conversation with strangers, close appeals to the conscience should never be attempted unless we can get the individual alone. Every man has a character of some sort to maintain, if it be only for

wickedness, and it is possible, by an injudicious attempt at reproof, to increase the evil which we deplore.

One very important matter in spiritual husbandry is, "that he that plougheth should plough in hope," 1 Cor. ix. 10. A bare peradventure as to the probability of success, will go but little way towards the production of persevering effort ; but let us stedfastly depend on the declarations of God concerning the ultimate triumph of his truth, and then difficulties will vanish, for our faith will remove mountains, and cast them into the sea, Matt. xxi. 21. Our rule of duty, moreover, will be taken, not from appearances or impressions, but from the lively oracles of God. "He that observeth the wind shall not sow, and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap," Eccles. xi. 4. If we wait for favourable omens, we may wait till our opportunity of improving them is gone for ever. We have already a more certain word of direction than our own unaided sagacity will ever be able to supply — "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand, for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or

that, or whether they both shall be alike good," verse 6.

Hence it appears, that the very circumstance which under the influence of morbid apprehensions would induce us to refrain from labour, when rightly regarded, will impel us to more extended effort, that disappointment in one quarter may be counterbalanced by success in another. Occasional failure is nothing new; it has mingled with the most auspicious scenes; but "what is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord," Jer. xxiii. 28. Judas was an apostate, but his eleven companions endured to the end; the defection of Ananias and Sapphira threw no suspicion over the triumphs of Pentecost; and the fatal error of Simon, the magician, placed in no peril the commission of Peter and John to bestow the Holy Ghost. Acts viii. 14—24.

A very hopeful department of Christian labour is with the young. Wherever we go we should endeavour to say something to them which will be worth remembering when we are dead. A single remark may direct the whole course of their future lives. But if we desire to do them good, our observations must not

be confined to the generalities of religion. As in the case of elder persons, close appeals to the conscience and the heart are the only means of producing a deep and lasting impression on their minds. The claims of Christ must be pressed on their immediate attention, and we must give them distinctly to understand that their characters are now forming for eternity.

A monstrous persuasion is abroad in the world, and is current in the church, that decision in religion belongs exclusively to riper age ; an opinion which has been the ruin of thousands. Not only have parents, professedly Christian, contented themselves while seeing their children grow up around them in utter carelessness about their souls, but they have even sanctioned in them the dangerous notion that the question of personal piety, like the choice of some business or profession, is one which belongs to a future day. Meanwhile, the unregeneracy of their offspring, so far from being a subject of deep and agonizing solicitude, has scarcely awakened the slightest anxiety. But though they have slumbered, the enemy has not, Matt. xiii. 25. The con-

sequence is, that the ground which they intended at some future time to cultivate, has been pre-occupied, and the seeds of licentiousness and infidelity have begun to bring forth fruit unto death, before it was even suspected that they had been sown.

I have almost been led to question whether some parents think their uncoverted children the subjects of depravity. More than once, when I was beginning to make an impression on the heart of some dear child, as to the necessity of loving and serving God, and the enormity of refusing or neglecting to obey him, have I been interrupted by some mistaken mother, who has assured me that her child is a very good little creature, and all that a parent can wish ; and that mother has not been a gay and thoughtless worldling, from whom such an observation would awaken no surprise, but a woman professing godliness, and who, years hence, (should she live to see her children forsake the faith of their fathers, and plunge into fashionable folly and dissipation,) will think it a most mysterious providence, that young people, so carefully trained, and so religiously educated, should be altogether regardless of piety.

Children of very tender age are susceptible not only of deep religious impressions, but of decided piety. So far as natural capacity is concerned, where the one may be found, there may the other. No child is too young to love the Saviour of the world, who is capable of understanding the nature of his claims ; it would be strange indeed were it otherwise. To make salvation a question of mere intellectual endowment, would ill accord with the moral perfections of God, and contradict some of the plainest declarations of holy writ. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth ! that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes," Luke x. 21, was the language of Christ ; and, as if to end all doubt on the subject, he further said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God," Mark x. 14. To receive one such little child in his name, and from the lips "of babes and sucklings," Matt. xxi. 16, to hear the perfection of his praise, is bliss which they who are wise to win souls alone can know.

To many, who have few other opportunities

of doing good, the Sabbath-school presents an inviting field; it may be so cultivated as to repay their exertions; yet, notwithstanding all the good which such institutions have hitherto accomplished, as a whole they have been a failure. Their design, in the first instance, was defective; it was mere instruction: the conversion of the children was not regarded as the chief, the essential thing, without which the best attainments would be vain, and all the labour of imparting knowledge be thrown away. In many cases the teachers themselves were unconverted, and with them the routine of instruction on the Sabbath was as much a matter of secular employment as any other during the week.

Another radical defect was, that Sabbath-schools were regarded as eleemosynary institutions, a refuge for the destitute. Conducted on such a plan, they have generally proved a loss of time and a waste of labour. There are localities, undoubtedly, where a Sabbath-school must of necessity be a charity-school, but such are only found in large cities and pauperized neighbourhoods. There can be no excuse for such a state of things elsewhere.

In some places, Sabbath-schools are now becoming what they ought always to have been, nurseries for "the household of faith." Where this is the case, they include all the children belonging to the congregation, and the teachers are some of the most intelligent and devoted members of the church, whose grand and exclusive aim is the salvation of every child committed to their care. In such instances the course of instruction comprehends something more than learning to read, and committing to memory portions of Scripture, catechisms, hymns, and confessions of faith; it embraces the elements of sound biblical information. The higher classes, taking the word of God for their text-book, are led at once to the fountain of knowledge, and, under suitable direction, are taught to search the Scriptures, whether things are so. Acts xvii. 11.

The beneficial influence of such a system, even on the teachers themselves, is incalculable. Unless they would become ridiculous in the eyes of their pupils, they must thoroughly examine the meaning and connexion of every passage cited in the lesson; and so, the habit of patient research, which, in the first instance,

was adopted as a precautionary measure of self-defence, will, even before they are aware of it, make them "mighty in the Scriptures." These, therefore, are methods of training, which, in the walks of private life, will furnish the church of God with its brightest ornaments: men sound in the faith, "in doctrine showing uncorruptness," holding forth the word of life. The vagaries of religious opinion to which superficial inquirers are commonly exposed, will present no temptations to persons, whose faith, thus grounded and settled, is no longer the sport of "every wind of doctrine." Eph. iv. 14.

Never shall we have such a revival of religion as the case requires, until all the departments of labour which I have specified, and others which my limits will not allow me to mention, are thoroughly and conscientiously filled. Every Christian must feel his own responsibility, and make it one subject of his morning prayer, that God would give him wisdom to win souls; and when he retires to his closet in the evening, he must be able, with a clear conscience and stedfast faith, to implore a blessing on the fresh labours which he has

put forth on that behalf. When Zion puts on her strength, her sons will never dare to sleep over their unprofitableness. A Christian in vigorous health, or able to attend to his usual avocations, retiring to rest without having made some distinct endeavour to save souls from death, will be disturbed in his dreams by the cries and groans of those who "are ready to be slain," and rising from his unrefreshing slumbers, will earnestly pray that he may never again so forget his sacred obligation, before he lies down on that bed from which he shall not rise till the heavens be no more.

Devoted, personal, and unremitting effort, on the part of the whole body of the faithful, would bring down such a blessing that there would be no room to contain it; the wilderness and the solitary place would be glad, and the desert would rejoice and blossom as the rose; churches and pastors would be doubled and quadrupled; repeated success would embolden the timid and encourage the desponding, and each new convert would immediately become a valuable auxiliary to the great cause of truth and holiness. "What are you doing for Christ?" would no longer be a question an-

swered only by a blush, or a sigh, or by silence more ominous than either, but it would meet with a ready response from a cloud of witnesses to whom the honoured individual would refer as his joy and crown of rejoicing.

When prosperity dawns on the church, converts will resemble in number, as well as in purity, the dew-drops of the morning. Psa. cx. 3. "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?" Isa. lx. 8. But when "a little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation," verse 22, to be regarded by none as their fathers in Christ, 1 Cor. iv. 15, will be thought a far greater calamity than, in the Hebrew commonwealth, it was reckoned to die childless. Children in the faith are the highest prize imaginable, short of a heavenly crown: "Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate." In such hands he may safely leave his reputation while living, and his memory when dead. Not even a tombstone may mark the spot where he lies, but "the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance," Psa. cxii. 6; and when the proudest monu-

ments of fame are blended in one common ruin, and the brightest lights of science are all gone out, they "that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever," Dan. xii. 3.

But though the grand reward of faithfulness to the claims of Christ and the souls of men is secured at the resurrection of the just, it often happens that "hope deferred maketh the heart sick," Prov. xiii. 12. It is therefore very important that those who watch for souls should be informed of every instance in which their labours have been successful. This is but an act of justice, a tribute of honesty as well as of gratitude. The woman who came in the press to our Lord, and touched the border of his garment, was not suffered to depart without acknowledging her obligation. He admired her faith, but not her silence; and to reprove her attempt at concealment, he made her declare before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately, Luke viii. 47. This incident is full of instruction, and ministers reproof to many who have received blessings by stealth, and have

never had the honesty to acknowledge on earth a debt of gratitude which they will remember in heaven.

On this subject I can write most feelingly. There have been seasons in which I have felt all the depression of labouring in vain, when, had I been told of instances of ministerial success which afterwards came to my knowledge, I should have thanked God and taken courage: and that which has happened to me has happened to others. Few Christians seem to account it a matter of sacred obligation to inform those whom God has honoured with the instrumentality of their conversion of that circumstance, although they would be more delighted at such intelligence than they would be with "thousands of gold and silver."

It is by no means improbable that many devoted servants of Christ have gone down to the grave with a broken heart, because they were never informed of the real extent of their success; and the injury inflicted on them was as nothing in comparison with its results as to others. It seems impossible to hear of the conversion of sinners through our labours, without feeling encouraged to labour more abundantly:

it is therefore not too much to affirm, that had some of the servants of Christ known all the occasions of thanksgiving which ought to have come to their knowledge, their success would have been greater, and their occasions of thanksgiving more abundant. The conversion of one sinner would have led them to attempt the conversion of another, until life itself would have become one unbroken series of devoted and successful labour.

While concealment of spiritual benefit is, on the part of some, the result of timidity or thoughtlessness, with others it arises from design; and in its defence they allege an apprehension of giving that glory to man which ought to be rendered to God. This is another instance in which perplexities never felt in common life are associated with religion. We surely do not the less feel our obligation to God for the preservation of our lives, because we reward the watchman who awakened us when we were sleeping among the flames. Who sent him to our rescue? How was it that we heard the warning? Whence came the strength, the self-possession, and the promptitude which secured our escape? Solomon has supplied an

answer: "Safety is of the Lord," Proverbs, xxi. 31.

"By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them," Eph. ii. 8—10. This is the grand doctrine which embraces, and combines, and harmonizes every other, throughout the whole range of divine revelation. Nevertheless, by agencies the most diverse "worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will," 1 Cor. xii. 11. Hence we become "fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God," Col. iv. 11, and are even required to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure, Phil. ii. 12, 13. On these grounds Paul felt no hesitation in exhorting Timothy to save both himself and them that heard him, 1 Tim. iv. 16. The admonition was enforced by his own example. He was made all things to all men, that he might by all means save some. 1 Cor. ix. 22.

Should it be contended that obedience to

Christ is in itself a sufficient motive to persevering exertion, apart from all further encouragement, it is enough to reply, that one who was "in labours more abundant," 2 Cor. xi. 23, and who counted not his life dear unto himself so that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus, Acts xx. 24, was not unaccustomed to look to his hearers for fruit which might abound to their account, Phil. iv. 17. He rejoiced, even when Christ was preached of envy and strife, by some who wished to add affliction to his bonds, chap. i. 15, 16, 18; but his tenderest sympathies were directed to those who were the fruit of his immediate labours. "As my beloved sons I warn you. For though ye have ten thousand instructers in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel," 1 Cor. iv. 14, 15. And the affection which he cherished towards these Corinthians was the invariable feeling of his heart, in relation to all his children in the faith. Witness his appeal to Philemon, on behalf of a runaway slave. "I beseech thee, for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds. If thou count me there-

fore a partner, receive him as myself. If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee aught, put that on mine account; I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it: albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides," Philemon x. 17 — 19. Only those whom God has extensively honoured with the conversion of souls, can comprehend the fulness of confidence, or the intensity of affection, which breathes in this one short sentence, "For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord." 1 Thess. iii. 8.

But whatever may be our subordinate sources of delight and encouragement, the secret of "patient continuance in well doing" can only be learned in the closet. Persevering prayer will lead to persevering effort, and our best sympathies will be those which bring us into closer fellowship with Him whom we serve. Perpetual intercourse with the King whose garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces whereby they have made him glad, Ps. xlv. 8, will enable us to say: "Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in

every place," 2 Cor. ii. 14. Wherever we go, the fragrance of heaven will rest on our footsteps, and the true odour of sanctity evince that we have been with Jesus. Our only apology for zeal which the world will reckon impertinent, and resist as obtrusive, will be that of Peter and John to the rulers, and elders, and scribes: "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard," Acts iv. 20.

To live "as seeing Him who is invisible," Heb. xi. 27, is the grand attainment with which no other will bear comparison. Whatever may be our qualifications for usefulness, if this be lacking, they will all be vain. We may enforce the claims of God, of Christ, of the soul, of eternity, "with the tongues of men and of angels," but in the absence of overwhelming views of Him whom no eye hath seen, all will be but "as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." The man of taste may praise our eloquence, and the careless sinner perhaps be startled by our fervid declamation; but both will despise our hypocrisy, and well they may: such themes as redeeming love and immortal life, ill befit the stage, and the man who is merely an actor had better let them alone. To pretend to that

compassion which we do not feel, and that fervour which we do not possess, will only be to expose ourselves to merited contempt: the world will mock our pretensions, God will reject our services, and Satan himself will say, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye?" Acts xix. 15.

Let us but convince the ungodly, that facts, solemn and awful, but unquestionable facts, have awakened our emotions, and the most careless and most hardened will cease to blame us for being in earnest. The true reason why the world ever charges the church with enthusiasm, is latent infidelity. The facts are disbelieved, and therefore the emotions awakened by those facts are treated as weaknesses or hallucinations. In no other way is it possible to account for the morbid sensitiveness which is so common as to powerful religious affections. No one would censure, for the intensity of his emotions, the man whose house is in flames, and who is watching the operations of the fire-brigade while they are attempting to reach the windows where his wife and children are imploring help, and expecting that each minute of delay will be fatal: under such circumstan-

ces, no amount of feeling, no violence of gesture, would be thought extravagant. But let a Christian, who is a husband, or a parent, be deeply moved because, notwithstanding all the efforts which are made for their benefit, the members of his household show no signs of conversion, and wherefore is he regarded as an enthusiast? Because the world disbelieves the threatenings of God, and therefore heeds not "the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone," Rev. xxi. 8.

The same skepticism which frowns on compassion for the impenitent, also scowls on the joy and peace in believing which are the birthright of the regenerate. A little worldly prosperity is expected to make a man very happy, and no one wonders at the satisfaction which accompanies the resolution, "I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods; and I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods, laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry," Luke xii. 18, 19. I remember an instance in which sudden prosperity was followed by even fatal effects. An industrious couple were at the same time seized

with a malignant fever. They were placed in separate rooms, but within hearing of each other. Their mutual inquiries were almost incessant, till delirium in both ended all anxiety. The husband died and was buried, while the wife was in a state of utter unconsciousness. When she began to recover her reason, the first indication of its return was the affectionate inquiry, "My dear!—my love!—are you better?" but there was no voice, neither any that regarded. She became alarmed. To keep her quiet, the nurse wickedly told her that her husband was better, but that the doctor had sent him away for change of air. This falsehood satisfied her for several days, and then she awoke to the overwhelming consciousness of her bereavement, and found herself the widowed mother of five children, with little prospect of any thing but the workhouse: the staff of the family was gone. She was, however, a woman of spirit, and she roused herself to exertion. Early and late she toiled to keep together the little business that remained, and in part she succeeded. It was a hard struggle, but still, by diligence and frugality, she kept herself and her babes from pauperism. Thus

things continued, till one morning the postman brought her a letter from the executors of an old gentleman, a distant relation to her late husband, but of whom she had never heard, and from whom, of course, she had no expectations, informing her of his death, and that he had left her eight hundred pounds. This sudden reverse of fortune was too much for her to bear; for a whole fortnight she never closed her eyes, and then she died. Her death was universally attributed to excessive joy, and though many lamented it for the sake of her children, none seemed to think it strange; certainly not one was heard to remark on the evils of property, or found to opine that an unexpected legacy is a very dangerous thing. Now, suppose that instead of being in straitened circumstances she had been under deep anxiety about her soul, and that instead of being informed of a legacy of eight hundred pounds, she had obtained an assurance of her acceptance with God, and that in consequence of such assurance, joy had kept her awake for a fortnight, at the end of which she died—what would the world have said then? How rife would have been the imputations of extravagance and fanaticism!

And why would the censure, withholden in the one case, be awarded in the other? Simply, because, in the first instance, the facts are admitted, and in the second they are disbelieved. And such, in truth, amidst all the reverence which they pretend to pay to religion, is the infidelity of a large portion of the unconverted.

But while "he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God," John iii. 18, those who are exempted from that condemnation must show their faith by their works, James ii. 18. Their holy zeal must prove their godly sincerity, 2 Cor. i. 12, and convince the world that the Christian faith is not a matter of opinion, or speculation, or conjecture, but of plain, demonstrable truth, of which they are quite as certain as of their own existence.

Till self-denial ceases to be so accounted, and personal sacrifices are thought unworthy of that name, the world will continue to disbelieve our creed, and mock our exertions. In vain shall we preach that the ways of wisdom are pleasantness, and that her paths are peace, Prov. iii. 17, while we ourselves account the service of

God a weariness. Our whole character must bear out our testimony. Risen with Christ, we must seek the things which are above; and while we offer to conduct men to brighter worlds, we must lead the way. Our families will then become nurseries for the church, and the church a nursery for heaven. Our general intercourse will constantly bear on the salvation of souls, and the pleasure of God will prosper in our hands.

But whether we will do the work or not, it must be done. The world is to be converted to Christ, and sooner or later the required agency will be found. Brethren, it remains for us to say whether we will lead the onward movement, or be trodden down by its pressure; whether we will impart a new character of fidelity to the rising age, or content ourselves with the selfish piety which has so long been current in the church, until the merciful providence of God, in pity to the next generation, shall thrust us aside to make room for men of firmer mould.

Yet why should our firmness, our zeal, or our piety, be inferior to theirs? Will the men of any age owe more to redeeming love than we, or have more powerful reasons for setting

forth the great salvation? Have we feelings? — so will they. Have we infirmities? — so will they. Can we find excuses? — so might they. There will be no motive for them which is not available now; no promise for them which may not be pleaded now; no aid for them which may not be granted now; and no success for them which may not be expected now. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord," 1 Cor. xv. 58.

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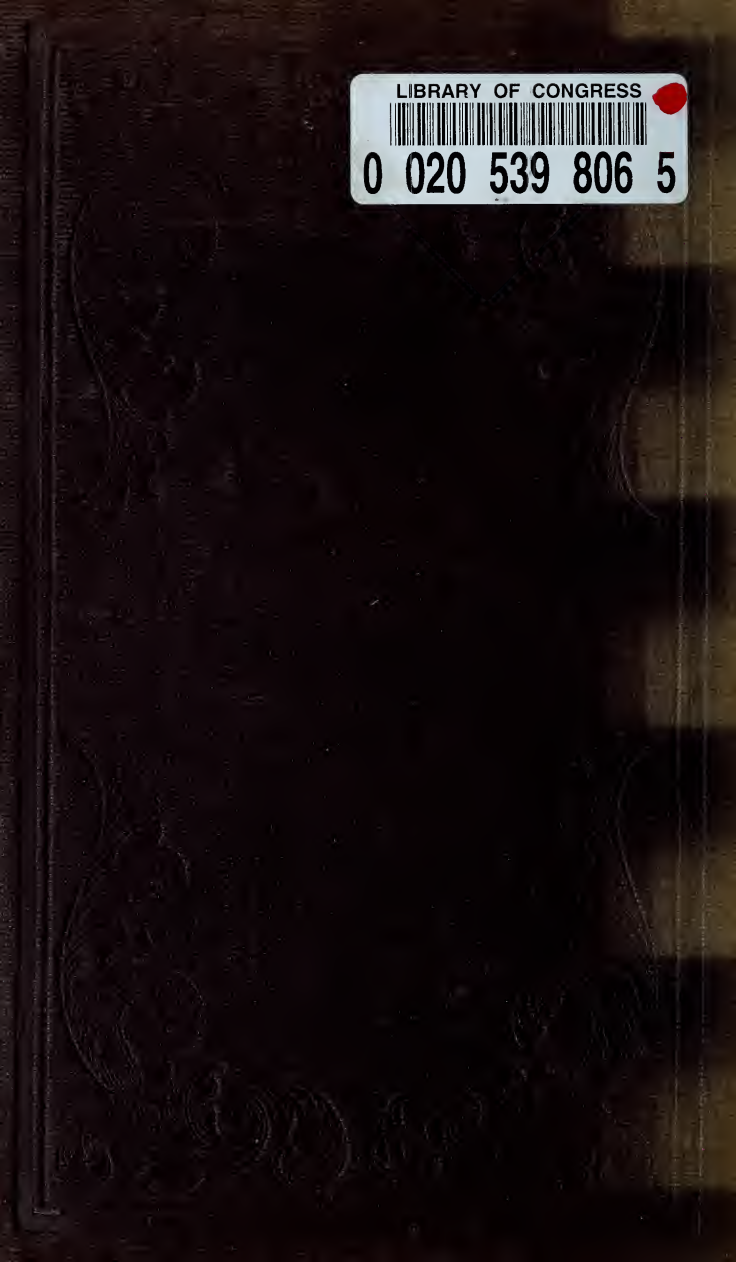
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